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ABSTRACT

A survey solicited teachers' and education majors' views of their professional preparation pertaining to fostering their classroom students' emotional growth. A total sample of 78 inservice teachers and 22 education majors responded to a self-assessment questionnaire, which included sections on skills, concepts, and attitudes. The skills section focused on teacher/learner communication, fostering growth of students' self-esteem and independence, discipline strategies, group leadership, and counseling activities. The concepts section addressed topics in the areas of child development, adolescence, self-esteem development, and affective readiness factors. The attitudes section was designed to assess attitudes about teacher roles in fostering students' emotional growth. Teachers rated themselves highly in regard to most skills and concepts but also indicated areas of only moderate or low mastery. Respondents reported frequent use of skills designed to increase students' ability to solve problems, make decisions, and foster self-esteem and acceptance of others. The teachers infrequently used the academic curriculum to achieve affectively oriented goals. Lack of professional development was mentioned as a causal factor in moderate or low mastery levels of affective skills. Education majors rated themselves higher on understanding adolescents and rejected the position that no one teacher can help all students. Both groups agreed that teachers can have an impact on the development of emotional well-being of their students. There was general agreement that increased emphasis on skills, concepts, and attitudes essential for fostering emotional growth of students is needed in both preservice and inservice programs. (JD)

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Fostering Students' Emotional Growth:

Implications for Preservice and Inservice Programs

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Abstract

A survey of professional teachers and teacher-education students was conducted to determine their views of their professional preparation pertaining to fostering students' emotional growth. The results of this and two previous reports are interpreted in terms of implications for preservice and inservice programs.

Fostering Students' Emotional Growth: Implications for Preservice and Inservice Programs

Given the importance of teachers' involvement in the affective area, it is instructive to survey the "state of the art" in terms of expert opinion, teachers' perceptions of current practices, and the adequacy and relevance of preservice and inservice professional development programs.

A review of the literature did not find any study which attempted to obtain a consensus of expert opinion on what constitutes the key elements necessary for a teacher to foster students' emotional growth, and few studies were found that surveyed teachers' attitudes, skills, or concepts in this area. Nesbit (1953) surveyed beginning teachers' roles in guidance activities and found high correlations between the teachers' felt adequacy for a given activity, the degree to which the activity had been included in their college training, and the extent to which the teachers reported performing the activity in their classrooms.

In a more recent survey (Laverty, Note 2) first-year teachers indicated a lower degree of skill development and less frequent use of teaching skills with affective objectives than of skills in other areas.

In regard to teachers' perceptions, the literature suggests that teachers generally prefer and are more comfortable with cognitively oriented, i.e., traditional educational, roles than with affectively oriented, i.e., mental health, roles (Hargrave & Hargrave, 1979; Koll & Bodine, Note 1; Schultz & Wolfe, 1973). This is not to say that teachers

are not "child-centered" or that they are not concerned with "the whole child," although they do vary on these dimensions. Kahn and Weiss (1973), for example, concluded that teachers of self-contained classes were more concerned about "the whole child" than were special-subject teachers. The same authors in their extensive review of literature also concluded that elementary teachers held more positive attitudes toward students than did secondary teachers, and that male teachers were less positive in their attitudes toward students than were female teachers. Not surprisingly, a recent study (Warger, 1979) found that male teachers were less interested in using affective techniques than were female teachers. Contrary to expectations, however, teachers' philosophies of human nature were not found to be related in a straightforward manner to their interest in using affective methods (Warger, 1979).

What does affect how teachers will view the teaching of affective responses is their own teacher-education program (Kahn & Weiss, 1973; Nesbit, 1953. A necessary preliminary step to improving course offerings and practicum experiences relating to teaching affective responses is the identification of the "crucial affective responses that the schools should be offering" (Kahn & Weiss, 1973, p. 804). Toward this end, Strein and French (in press) conducted a nationwide study employing a carefully chosen panel of experts to identify the key skills, concepts, and attitudes necessary for teachers to foster students' emotional growth. Of particular relevance to professional development programs are the following conclusions reached by the experts: 1) a wide variety of skills were identified as being essential for teachers to foster students' emotional growth; 2)

theoretical abstractions in education and psychology were viewed as being less important than the acquisition of skills; 3) where an objective could be reached by a variety of competitive methods, no particular alternative was favored so long as the teacher had an effective set of skills to reach the more general goal; and 4) mechanical teacher behavior was not viewed as being adequate, i.e., congruence of attitudes, values and behavior was deemed to be essential.

In connection with the above-mentioned study of expert opinion, a survey (Strein & Murphy, 1982) was conducted to determine teachers' perceptions of their mastery of the essential skills, concepts and attitudes as defined by the panel of experts. As the findings have implications for preservice and inservice programs, the results will be summarized in a later section of this paper.

Purpose

It is the purpose of this article to report the results of a survey of teachers and teacher-education students regarding their views of their professional preparation pertaining to fostering students' emotional growth, and to interpret the results of two previous reports (Strein & French, in press; Strein & Murphy, 1982) in terms of implications for preservice and inservice programs. Since the study was descriptive in nature, hypotheses were not stated; but the following research questions were formulated: 1) what, if any, differences exist between teachers' and teacher-education students' perceptions of their skills, concepts, and attitudes in regard to fostering students'

emotional growth?; and 2) to what degree are teachers and teacher-education students exposed in their preservice and inservice programs to the skills essential to foster student emotional growth?

Method

Participants

The names of 100 teachers were randomly drawn from lists in 27 rural/suburban school districts in Central Pennsylvania. All teachers were contacted, in person, resulting in 91 returns. After invalid questionnaires were removed, a total sample of 78 teachers (41 elementary, 37 secondary) remained and were included in the study. Demographic data suggested a sample slightly more experienced than the national average, but roughly equivalent in terms of amount of formal education (See Table 1). In order to provide a base for comparison with practicing

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Insert Table 1 about here

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teachers, volunteers were selected from teacher-education majors enrolled in an advanced undergraduate course in educational psychology. A total of 22 usable questionnaires were returned. The sample may not have been representative of teacher-education students as a whole and was markedly different from the sample of professional teachers, in that there was a large proportion of students whose area of specialization was other than regular classroom instruction. (See Table 2).

Insert Table 2 about here

Instrumentation

Using the list of key elements defined by a panel of experts (Strein & French, in press) a self-assessment questionnaire was designed, including sections on skills, concepts, and attitudes. (Sample items are listed in Table 3). The skills section, consisting of 28 items, focused on teacher/learner communication, fostering growth of students' self-esteem, fostering student independence, discipline strategies, group leadership function, and counseling-related activities. The six items in the concepts section addressed topics in the areas of child development, adolescence, self-esteem development, and affective readiness factors. The attitudes section contained 12 pairs of opinion items, one positively and one negatively worded, designed to assess the teachers' attitudes regarding their roles in fostering students' emotional growth. Open-ended questions were also included.[1] Since self-rating questionnaires have traditionally had difficulty with artificially high ratings (Helmstadter, 1970), two validity, or "lie," items, one each in the skills and concepts sections, were included in order to assess the validity of each questionnaire. Each item was composed of a nonexistent skill or concept. Any questionnaire which contained a rating of "4" or greater on either of the validity items was discarded as being invalid.

[1] A copy of the questionnaire may be obtained from the author.

Insert Table 3 about here

Two separate pilot studies involving a total of 14 elementary teachers were conducted. Based on item analyses and teacher comments, eight of the items in the skills and concepts section and 12 of the opinion statements were rewritten, due to apparent ambiguity of the original wording. The instructions to the questionnaire were also rewritten. Internal consistency within the three main sections of the resulting final form of the questionnaire was quite high, with KR-20 coefficients ranging from .78 to .93.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the teachers' responses to each of the questionnaire items. To make an item-by-item comparison between the teacher-education students' responses, and those of the teachers, a repeated-measures analysis of variance was used. Post-hoc comparisons were made by comparing obtained Behrens-Fisher statistics to critical values from a published table designed to control for family-wise error (Games, 1977).

Results

An analysis of the teachers' responses to the items in the skills, concepts, and attitudes sections have been reported elsewhere (Strein & Murphy, 1982), and will only be summarized here. The teachers rated

themselves rather highly in regard to most of the skills and concepts, but also indicated areas of only moderate or low mastery. Respondents reported rather frequent use of skills designed to increase students' ability to solve problems and make decisions, and to foster self-esteem and acceptance of others. In regard to using parts of the academic curriculum to achieve affectively oriented goals, teachers reported much less frequent use, with over a third indicating very infrequent or no use. Commenting on skills infrequently used or with reported moderate or low mastery levels, teachers often mentioned lack of professional development as a causal factor. As a means of identifying areas which may need additional emphasis from preservice and inservice programs, items which received only moderate or low ratings are presented in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Comparisons were made between the responses of the teachers and the teacher-education students. Analysis of variance produced a non-significant main effect for overall differences, F (1, 83) = 0.30. A significant ($p < .01$) interaction term, F (1, 83) = 4.27, indicated the presence of some significant differences between individual items, and follow-up post-hoc inspection produced significant ($p < .01$) differences on three items. The students rated themselves higher on understanding of the special needs and psychological development of adolescents by a small one-point margin (concept #1). In the attitudes section, students

strongly rejected the position that no one teacher can help all students (attitude pair #7) and differed from the practicing teachers on this issue by a substantial three-point margin. Teachers were slightly less optimistic than the students that teachers can have an impact on the development of emotional well-being of their students (attitude pair #10). Both groups, however, indicated agreement with this position. Data for these comparisons are presented in Table 5. All other areas of the questionnaire, as described in the instrumentation section, produced similar responses from the two groups.

Insert Table 5 about here

In addition to the items requiring self-ratings, an item was included to assess the degree of exposure in college and inservice programs to the skills surveyed by the questionnaire. Open-ended items regarding hindrances to the more frequent use of these skills, and the need for assistance from colleges, school administration, and inservice programs were also included. The ratings are summarized in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

It is immediately apparent from inspection of the data that the teachers reported only minimal exposure to the skills in either college or inservice courses, while the students reported exposure largely at a superficial level. On the open-ended items, the teachers generally reinforced their numerical ratings, indicating that preparation had been

minimal.

A few teachers indicated adequate preparation in college, inservice courses, professional readings, or some combination of the three, but many expressed frustration at the lack of such opportunities in their preparation programs. Modeling from other teachers was also mentioned, and generally the importance of learning by experience was stressed.

In regard to hindrances to using the skills, several problems were listed. By far the most frequent hindrance listed was lack of time, such statements being made by over a third of those responding. In addition, however, the need for further professional development was seen as a factor in prohibiting greater use by a similar proportion of respondents.

The teachers clearly indicated a need for assistance from various sources, with almost 40 percent of those who expressed an opinion specifically mentioning need for increased inservice opportunities. Several teachers mentioned the need for help from colleges or school administration.

Regardless of the preferred delivery system or the type of help sought, the teachers were nearly unanimous in expressing the opinion that assistance would only be valuable if it were meaningful and from a competent source.

Discussion

Comparisons of the teachers with the students in education must be viewed with some caution, since the student sample included a large number

of students with "special subject" majors. The differences found on two of the attitude items can be interpreted as greater optimism or idealism (or less realism) on the students' part. The finding that the students held an even stronger attitude that teachers can and should be able to be effective with all of the students in their classrooms suggests that this attitude, while prevalent throughout the educational system, becomes tempered with experience.

The reason for the students indicating a greater knowledge of the special needs and psychological development of adolescents is not immediately apparent. The students' majors, biased in the direction of areas which accent individual contacts with pupils, may have caused the students to believe that they are more closely attuned to the individual needs of adolescents.

The rather minimal exposure in college and inservice programs reported by the teachers is in keeping with the frequent complaint, voiced by teachers and mentioned in many ways in the respondents' written comments, that college programs often prepare teachers to teach content, but not to teach live students.

The teachers were quite in agreement with the experts' position that abstract theory has been overplayed in education. Strong opinions were expressed in favor of workable, down-to-earth inservice and preservice education programs. It is clear that programs dealing with affective objectives must be reality-based and practically oriented if they are to be accepted by, and useful for, teachers. The fact that the teachers did, nevertheless, express strong interest in further

skill development in these areas, suggests that a need exists which is currently not being met. By their open-ended responses, the teachers seemed to be looking for competent leadership from some source, both in terms of imparting skills and in setting a climate in which facilitating emotional development is an accepted and important undertaking.

IMPLICATIONS

Since this study dealt only with fostering students' emotional growth, and not with other equally important teacher functions, the resulting implications for preservice and inservice programs pertain to only a portion of such programs.

Continued inclusion of, and increased emphasis on, skills, concepts, and attitudes essential for fostering emotional growth of students is clearly indicated in regard to both preservice and inservice programs. Specific skills and concepts which may need increased attention from professional development programs can be inferred from the items which received only moderate or low ratings by the teachers. Crisis counseling stands out as a skill strongly advocated by the experts, but on which the teachers rated their competence as being rather low.

Results from both the teachers and the experts suggest that professional development programs should concentrate on practical, down-to-earth skills, with less of an emphasis on abstract theoretical constructs. While specific approaches and skills are necessary, which specific skills are stressed is less important than making sure teachers have some avenue to approach the more general objective.

One of the weakest areas identified by the teachers was the integration of affective goals with the predominantly cognitive academic curriculum. A need for preparation exists in this area. Brown's (1977) work on confluent education could provide a general base for such professional development, while Castillo's (1978) writings include resources for specific lesson planning.

Some misconceptions can be particularly misleading and self-defeating. One such example is the belief that a good teacher can, or should be able to, be effective with every student. It would be appropriate for preservice, and inservice, programs to help teachers to adopt a more realistic position on this question, still maintaining high expectations, but allowing teachers to identify their own areas of strength and weakness, and to seek assistance when needed. Gordon (1977) has made helpful suggestions for countering the imperative to be a "perfect teacher."

Perhaps the most significant implication for professional development programs comes from the experts' opinion that a holistic approach is required in order for a teacher to be effective; discrete skills and mechanical behavior being insufficient. This implies that teacher-education programs should include the development of affective as well as cognitive components, as suggested by Combs (1965).

Reference Notes

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TABLE 1

Distribution of Teacher-Subjects by Elementary/Secondary Levels, Level of Education, and Years of Experience

	Sample[1]		Nationwide Teachers[2]
	N	% of total	% of all teachers
Elementary	50(41)	54.9 (52.6)	53.8
Secondary	41(37)	45.1 (47.4)	46.2
Level of Education			
Bachelor's degree	52(43)	57.1 (55.1)	62.4
Masters' degree	37(33)	40.7 (42.3)	31.6
Post-masters'	2(2)	2.2 (2.6)	3.1
Years of Experience			
1-5	22(17)	24.2 (21.8)	35.0
6-10	30(27)	32.9 (34.5)	25.4
11-15	22(18)	24.2 (23.1)	15.6
16-20	8(7)	8.8 (9.0)	9.5
over 20	9(9)	9.9 (11.6)	14.3

[1]Numbers in parentheses indicate data for valid questionnaires only.

[2]Data from Digest of Education Statistics 1979. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979.

TABLE 2

Distribution of Areas of Specialization of Student-Subjects

Area	N[1]	% of Sample
Elementary Education	7 (4)	28.0 (18.2)
Secondary Education	3 (3)	12.0 (13.6)
Other (including special education, vocational education, deaf education, etc.)	14 (14)	56.0 (63.6)
Unknown	1 (1)	4.0 (4.5)

[1]Numbers in parentheses indicate data for valid questionnaires only.

TABLE 3

Sample Items From Teacher Questionnaire

Skills							
	unskilled or unfamiliar						highly skilled
Skill at helping students to learn self-control.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Skill at using classroom activities specifically designed to increase students' self-esteem, e.g., DUSO materials.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Concepts							
	unfamiliar						understand very well
Understanding of the special needs and psychological development of adolescents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Knowledge of the typical emotional problems of normal development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Attitudes							
	strongly disagree						strongly agree
Teachers should attempt to have an impact on the development of emotional well-being of their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Students' ideas and feelings are usually not that interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

TABLE 4

Skills and Concepts with Moderate or Low Ratings

Moderate
Using reflecting listening
Increasing students' ability to solve problems and make decisions
Increasing students' involvement in making classroom rules
Specifically, using nonpunitive discipline methods
Helping students increase self-control
Helping students to learn acceptable outlets for strong emotion
Ensuring adequate amounts of success for each student
Integrating affective and cognitive learnings
General counseling skills
Understanding special needs and psychological development of adolescents
Knowledge of typical emotional problems of normal development
Low
Using I-messages
Using classroom activities specifically designed to foster self-esteem
Use of creative writing and literature for emotional development
Crisis counseling skills
Use of role playing in the classroom

TABLE 5

Items with Significant Differences:

Teachers vs. Students

Item	Teachers		Students		Differences	t - value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Concept #1[1]	4.64	1.60	5.67	0.84	1.03*	3.69***
Attitude #7	8.67	3.10	5.61	2.81	3.06**	4.01***
Attitude #10	11.79	2.10	13.11	1.02	1.32**	3.74***

* possible range - 6 points

** possible range - 13 points

*** $p < .01$ ($df = 41, \infty$, critical $t = 3.66$)

[1]Concept #1: Understanding of the special needs and psychological development of adolescents. Attitude #7: Acceptance that no one teacher can help all students. Attitude #10: Belief that teachers can have an impact on the development of emotional well-being of their students.

TABLE 6

Reported Degree of Exposure to Skills

Included on Teacher Questionnaire

Degree of Exposure	Teachers				Students	
	College		Inservice		College	
	N	percent	N	percent	N	percent
None	4	5.1	11	14.1	0	0.0
very little	34	43.6	33	42.3	4	19.0
superficial	23	29.5	18	23.1	11	52.4
considerable	16	20.5	16	20.5	6	28.6
in depth	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0